

THE PRESSURE APPLIED

by

HAYLEY FOWLER

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The University of Texas at Arlington
Arlington, Texas

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Thesis approved:

Committee Chair, Professor Cameron Schoepp, School of Art

Chris Powell, School of Art

Rachel Livedalen, School of Art

Dr. Joseph Butler, Associate Dean for the College of Fine Arts

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VITA

Hayley Fowler was born October 4, 1988 in Fort Worth, Texas to Oliver Gonzales and Teresa Fowler. She earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in Glass from the University of Texas at Arlington in Arlington, Texas, in 2011.

In August 2015, Fowler enrolled at Texas Christian University to earn her Master of Fine Arts in Sculpture. While in graduate school she held a TCU Graduate Assistantship as studio assistant for the TCU Sculpture Department (2015-2016) and was a teaching assistant for Three-Dimensional Design (2016-2017) and a teacher of record instructing Three-Dimensional Design (2017-2018). In 2016 she was awarded the International Sculpture Center's Outstanding Student Achievement in Sculpture Award and participated in the associated exhibition at Grounds for Sculpture in New Jersey.

ABSTRACT

The pressure applied is a representation of the way in which I work and the type of experience that I want the viewer to have. It is a site-specific project that did not exist beforehand and that will not continue to exist after the current exhibition. These works explore my interest in complying to restraints of my body, of available resources and of time.

THE PRESSURE APPLIED

My practice is informed by ideas of labor, value and materiality, resulting in work that physically and conceptually addresses these issues. In responding to materials and spaces, I contemplate their value, both monetarily and socially, while simultaneously questioning the value of my time and efforts. I often choose to engage with industrial and found objects, applying them to my work in ways that are outside of their original function; however, it is important that these materials continue to demonstrate their innate properties even after being used in my work.

A sensitivity to place and how my physical existence relates to it are factors that inform my actions. The qualities of my body, as well as the current visible state of any specific location, determine my process of responding to a situation. Through acts that can be strenuous, responsive and performative, I establish an intimate relationship between myself and my works. While developing this connection, I remain aware of my body's efforts and the exertion required to move or deconstruct materials and document the results to give these actions a previously absent permanence.

I was unsure of what I would put in the gallery for my MFA thesis exhibition but referenced how I had worked in the past to arrive at my preliminary decisions: I envisioned a space in which actions would take place, with objects or marks functioning as clues to suggest what had occurred. I thought about how viewers would be able to see

physical remnants of a process in the space and that this would allow them to imagine what it would have been like to witness the installation process. The actions would not be performance-based, such as Janine Antoni's *Loving Care* [plate 1], in which she mopped the gallery floor during the opening with her hair after having soaked it in hair dye, slowly pushing the audience out of the space. Instead, they would be more similar to Matthew Barney's *Drawing Restraint* series [plate 2], in which he devised various ways of putting resistance on his body while drawing directly onto the surfaces of a room, the marks acting as evidence but the required activity being the dominant element. Rather than inviting an audience to witness the actions, I would do them by myself in an empty room, and they would be performative in that they would reference a person's physical presence and efforts.

While I was unsure of what would be in the space, I was sure that the atmosphere would be quiet and restrained, with an emphasis on effort. Knowing this, I chose to make show cards by hand to reflect the nature of the exhibit [plate 3]. I blind-embossed text onto white paper and tore the edges to make two hundred cards, which resulted in a monochromatic object that had been reduced to only the necessary information. Each card was editioned and signed as a limited edition print, further reiterating that they are an extension of my practice and objects in and of themselves, meant to be taken away by the viewer as a tangible reminder of the experience.

The pressure applied consists of two installations that, combined, are an honest representation of the way in which I work and the type of experience that I want the viewer to have. The exhibit is not a culmination of the past three years but an entity in itself: It is a site-specific project that did not exist before and that will not continue to

exist after. My interest in complying to restraints – of my body, of available resources and of time – is reflected in the fact that, while I was able to predict my needs and prepare some components ahead of time, the majority of the work could not be made until I had access to the gallery, giving me two and a half days to create the exhibition on-site.

Upon entering the gallery [plate 4], the viewer is faced with two prominent objects: *290 pounds moved forward and back* consists of a plaster form on the ground, less than an inch tall but four feet wide and thirty-two feet long, that is running parallel to the wall of the gallery with an unwieldy rock resting on it at the far end. The second object, *wrapped volume: 5,000 feet*, is created with the gallery's four moveable walls themselves, arranged in a rectangular shape between the two concrete pillars. The lower portion of the structure that the walls create has been wrapped in stretch wrap nearly one hundred times, and on either side there are two acrylic sound domes hanging from the ceiling that are quietly playing audio of each action. The environment in the space is dimly lit, still and contemplative, encouraging the viewer to reflect the same tone.

The gallery has four moveable walls that cannot be removed from the space, and I responded by creating a second interior within the already-existing interior. The walls are arranged to make a three-sided room, with the opening facing away from the space and toward the windows. I wanted this secondary space to have an act applied to it, and for that action to be something that did not initially seem to be physically difficult but would become difficult over time and through repetition, requiring a prolonged endurance on my part.

Wrapped volume: 5,000 feet [plate 5] incorporates the wall structure not as a surface on which to display work but as a material itself. I wrapped five thousand feet of

stretch wrap around it, pulling it taut at each corner to wrap it as tightly as I could. Each layer overlapped the last as I encased the walls, wrapping from the bottom to as high up as I could reach and then traveling down toward the ground again. The top edge of the plastic droops slightly between each corner, and the layers billow out slightly, interrupting the hard rectangularity of the walls, both of which I did not anticipate but was pleased to observe afterward.

While the walls began as an open shape, wrapping the entire structure creates a fourth wall [plate 6], closing the form and marking it as an object. There is a glowing light from within, emphasizing its hollowness and highlighting the characteristics of the plastic; while a single layer of stretch wrap would be crystal-clear, the multiple layers that create the fourth wall are semi-opaque, providing a cloudy view into the white interior. On the other three sides there is support for the walls below the bottom edge of the plastic, but on this fourth side there is a gap, allowing for light to leak out and to reveal that there is no surface behind the stretch wrap.

During the installation I had a microphone attached to my body and the recording devices on my person, which allowed me to carry out the action without any assistance or performance factor. Beside *wrapped volume: 5,000 feet*, hanging from the ceiling on the side closest to the entrance of the gallery, is the first sound dome, which a viewer can stand below to listen to the audio recorded during installation. The sound is an ongoing screech that grates on the ear, the classic plastic-on-plastic noise associated with stretch wrap. There are occasional tugging sounds from when the wrap got too stuck to itself, as well as some pauses when I took a break from hunching over while wrapping the lower edge. Because the physical act was not intensely difficult but grew in difficulty over time

and resulted in muscle soreness rather than increased heart rate, the dominant sound is the shifting and stretching of the material.

Conversely, *290 pounds moved forward and back* [plate 7] is the site of an act that was very challenging from the beginning and required a significantly larger amount of physical effort. The rock, which weighs two hundred and ninety pounds, was found in a public space and appropriated for the exhibit. I was interested in dragging it around on the gallery floor, and I hoped that the action would leave a trace of what had occurred, either by the rock leaving detritus behind or by marking the floor. In order to facilitate this idea and to protect the ground of the gallery, I made a plaster slab that would act as a floor on a floor, as well as a form itself. The dimensions of the shape were determined by the remaining space in the gallery following the wall arrangement and reflect the standardized measurements of raw material, referencing the four-by-eight-foot sheets of plywood that make up the initial structure on which to pour. Plaster, a material I am attracted to for its matte white surface and have struggled to keep pristine in the past, was chosen because of its willingness to pick up information. As a material that gets dirty easily, it would work to my advantage by emphasizing the path of the rock through marks and debris.

After the plaster had been poured in several parts and had been left to set overnight, the rock was placed at the far end of the form. In order to create a more complex record of the rock's path, I decided that I would move the rock from one end to the other, and then back to its original starting point. This would allow for more information to be transferred to the plaster and would also emphasize the low-grade absurdity of my moving the rock in the first place.

Again, I set up recording devices on myself and moved the rock in the only way that I could manage, by pulling on alternating ends of it with all the force of my body. The audio can be heard from the second sound dome on the far end of the gallery, and it is drastically different from the stretch wrap sounds, featuring the low rumbles of the rock scraping against the plaster surface and my footsteps as I make my way from side to side. This action demanded full exertion from the beginning rather than slowly building up in difficulty, which is reflected in the sounds of my breathing as it quickly becomes labored throughout the recording. There is just as much pausing and breathing as there is movement of the rock, creating an intimate listening experience of a sound that is not typically heard in such a concentrated state.

In the process of moving the rock, debris such as dirt and leaves were knocked off the bottom and transferred onto the plaster surface [plate 8], leaving behind traces of the rock's original location prior to being used in the exhibition. There are also many curved scratches in the plaster [plate 9] that suggest the way in which the rock was moved, pivoting along each side of the white form. These overlapping marks, showing the path of the heavy object, create a subtle drawing that is revealed through the shifting of the gallery's lights as the viewer walks along the installation. They are a visual reminder of the friction and resistance created between the two materials, and the way in which one has to give out to accommodate the other.

These two actions, wrapping walls with five thousand feet of stretch wrap and moving a two hundred and ninety-pound rock, both emphasize the effort required to deconstruct and work with material, focusing on the physicality of the act of making rather than the objects waiting at the end of the process. By not allowing myself to use

any tools or equipment to facilitate these physically difficult actions, I pushed on the boundaries of what my body was capable of achieving on its own, and there is a quality of humility in accepting the limits of my physical self and acknowledging what a struggle even seemingly simple tasks can become. The notion of transferring momentum from my body to an object was echoed in the transferring of pressure from the bottom of the rock onto the plaster, resulting in scratches in the surface that visually indicate this friction between two things. Similarly, there was a shift in tension from my arms pulling on the roll of stretch wrap to the interaction between the wall's surface and the plastic, with the horizontal pulls of the material suggesting that strained relationship.

The titles of the works aid in the viewer's imagining what the installing process was like and in conceiving of carrying out the acts themselves; they function as documentation by providing concrete information about the incredibly long stretch of material and the seemingly small object that is so weighted to the earth. The more overt form of documentation in the show, the recorded audio, is another tool in conceptualizing what my specific experience was of manifesting the exhibition. The sound domes give the viewer more insight by sharing the sounds of the installation from my perspective.

Reflecting the intimacy of the installation process, the viewer must stand directly below the dome in order to hear the sound as clearly as possible, which, due to the size of each audio device, does not provide a comfortable amount of space for more than one person to listen at a single time. The idea that listening to the audio is a singular experience, in which the viewer can gaze at the objects while hearing their creation, mirrors the singular experience that I had during the installation.

The pressure applied is a representation of my interests in pushing on the restraints of my body, of available resources and of time, as well as a contemplation of the value of all these components. There is an emphasis on allowing for materials to display their innate properties and for the viewer to experience the work in a way similar to how I put the exhibition together. The environment is quiet and restrained, providing a space in which to discover all the subtle connections echoing throughout the show, and reflects my practice of genuine and focused effort to carry out actions. By making structures on-site that are unable to be removed wholly as they exist in the space, I am putting myself in the position of having to destroy the objects in order to take down the show. Thus, both myself and the viewers will walk away with the same remnant to remind us of the experience: a single embossed card.



PLATE 1 Janine Antoni, *Loving Care*, 1992. Performance at Anthony D'Offray Gallery, London. Photograph by Prudence Cumming Associates.



PLATE 2 Matthew Barney, *Drawing Restraint No. 20*, 2013. The Morgan Library & Museum, New York. Photograph by Graham S. Haber.

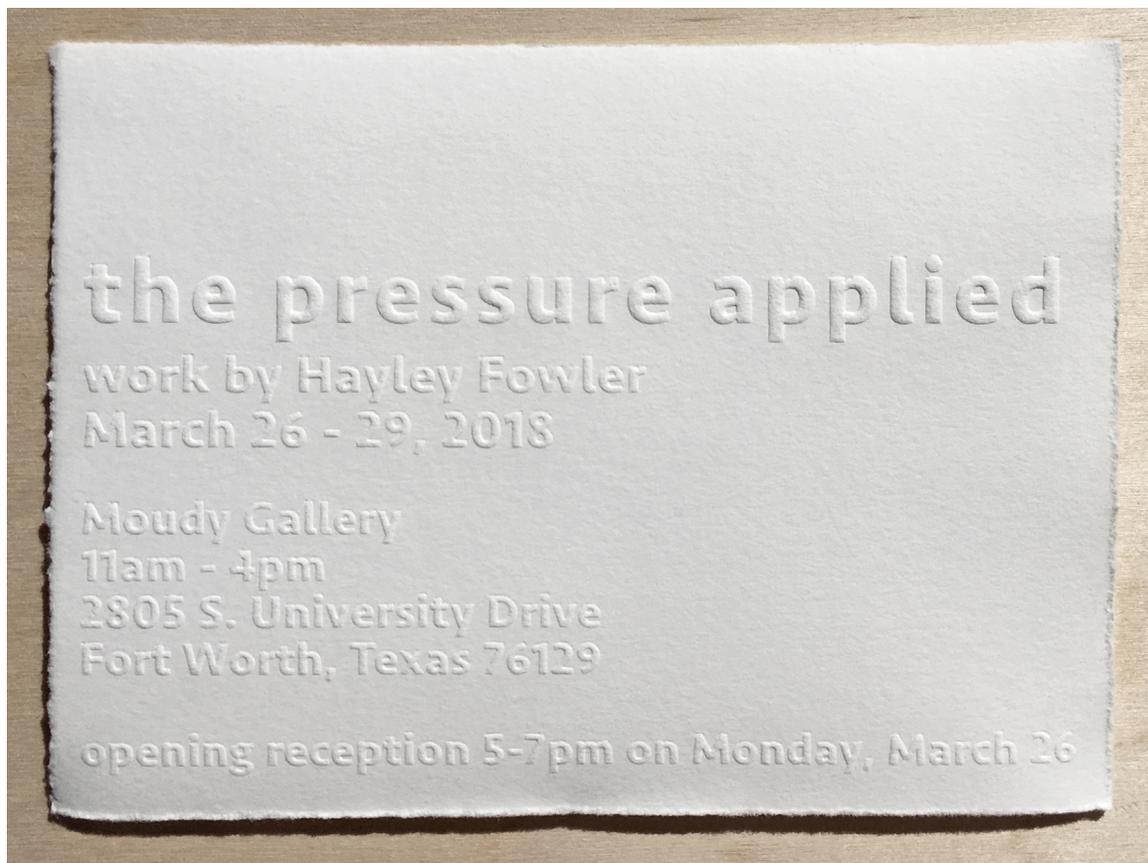


PLATE 3 Hayley Fowler, *the pressure applied* show card, 2018. Blind embossed paper. 4 ½" x 6 ½".

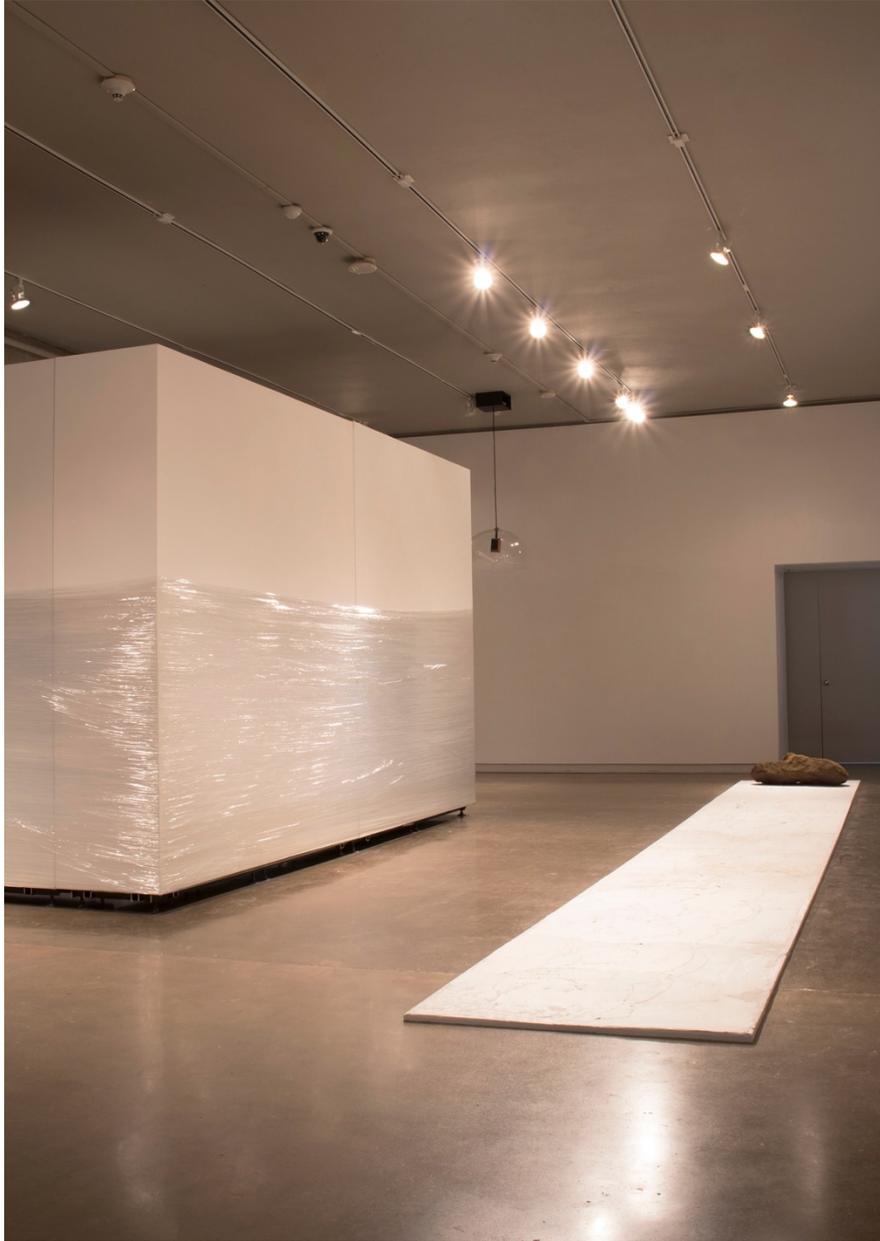


PLATE 4 Hayley Fowler, *the pressure applied*, 2018. MFA thesis exhibition.



PLATE 5 Hayley Fowler, *wrapped volume: 5,000 feet*, 2018. Stretch wrap, looped audio. 10' x 16 ½' x 10 ¼'; audio duration: 47:19.



PLATE 6 Hayley Fowler, *wrapped volume: 5,000 feet*, 2018. Stretch wrap, looped audio. 10' x 16 ½' x 10 ¼'; audio duration: 47:19.



PLATE 7 Hayley Fowler, *290 pounds moved forward and back*, 2018. Borrowed rock, plaster, looped audio. 17" x 4' x 32"; audio duration: 12:27.



PLATE 8 Hayley Fowler, *290 pounds moved forward and back*, 2018. Borrowed rock, plaster, looped audio. 17" x 4' x 32'; audio duration: 12:27.



PLATE 9 Hayley Fowler, *290 pounds moved forward and back*, 2018. Borrowed rock, plaster, looped audio. 17" x 4' x 32'; audio duration: 12:27.